

Delegation Fights Risky Practice of Shortchanging Pilots

CLARENCE CENTER, N.Y. – Following the revelation that Pinnacle Airlines approved six-figure salary increases for its executive leadership mere weeks before entering bankruptcy protection, Senators Charles E. Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and Representatives Kathy Hochul (NY-26), Brian Higgins (NY-27), and Louise Slaughter (NY-28) today sent a letter to Pinnacle Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer John Spanjers demanding that they put aviation safety first as the company juggles limited resources.

"This is a sign of misguided priorities," said Congresswoman Slaughter. "Instead of taking care of the family members of the victims of Continental Connection Flight 3407 and the employees of their airline, executives at Pinnacle have decided to put themselves first at a time when the company is declaring bankruptcy."

"The deplorable actions of Pinnacle Airlines should be reversed and their employees, who have been improperly paid for months, should receive the salaries they earned," said Congresswoman Hochul. "The tragedy of Flight 3407, right in the heart of my district, highlights the dangers of underpaid and overworked pilots, and it's unconscionable for their corporate officers to receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in pay increases right before declaring bankruptcy."

"We've seen Pinnacle cut corners on safety and on pilot salaries, but evidently that policy doesn't apply when it comes to their executives," said Senator Schumer. "Their employees, the pilots, and the flying public deserve answers. These latest facts are appalling, and Pinnacle needs to reset their priorities immediately. Instead of providing golden parachutes for retiring CEOs, Pinnacle should make sure its pilots are paid a decent wage on time and that they put passenger safety above personal perks. In the strongest terms, I'm urging Pinnacle to do an about face and put their customers and pilots first."

"Shortchanging pilots while handing out big payouts to top executives is unfair, and undermines

the new flight safety precautions we've fought hard alongside the families of Flight 3407 to put in place," Senator Gillibrand said. "Our efforts to improve pilot training and prevent fatigue go hand in hand with fairness on the job, and Pinnacle needs to do what's right for their pilots."

"Allegations about Pinnacle's financial activities as they file for bankruptcy are cause for concern," said Congressman Higgins. "The most important thing should be continuing to ensure that passengers have a safe flying experience and that pilot safety reforms continue to be implemented. We have come too far in our fight alongside the Flight 3407 Families to make flying safer for all Americans to let anything distract from this goal."

A copy of the letter by the Western New York Delegation to Pinnacle can be found [here](#).

Last year, Pinnacle paid its outgoing CEO, Philip Trenary, \$1.7 million in severance, and last month it increased the salary of the current CEO by \$250,000. COO John Spanjers saw an increase of salary of \$125,000.

Since the crash of Continental Connection Flight 3407 in Clarence Center in 2009, the local Members of Congress have fought tirelessly alongside the families and friends of the victims of the crash to ensure stronger flight safety standards for the flying public. Earlier this week, following Pinnacle's announcement of bankruptcy, the Western New York Delegation sent a letter to Pinnacle Airlines urging them to honor all obligations to Flight 3407 families.